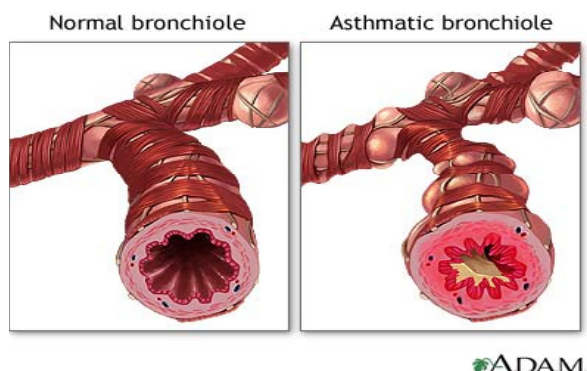


# Asthma and Mold

## What is asthma?

**Asthma** is a chronic lung disease that can make it hard to breathe. This is because of:

- Inflammation (swelling)
- Mucus in the airways
- Tightening of muscles around the airways



Common signs and symptoms of asthma include:

- wheezing
- coughing
- stuffy nose
- tight chest
- shortness of breath
- feeling tired

## Asthma in Utah

- About 8% of Utahns currently have asthma (source: BRFSS 2007)
  - » Males - 7.2%
  - » Females - 8.9%

## Asthma Triggers

An asthma trigger is something that can cause someone to have an asthma attack. Examples include:

- Allergens - a substance that can cause an allergic reaction<sup>4</sup> (pollen, animals, dust, mold)
- Irritants (cold air, chemicals and sprays, tobacco smoke)
- Upper respiratory infection (like a cold)

## What is mold?

**Molds are fungi.** People are regularly exposed to 200 different fungi and there is no way to completely avoid exposure<sup>1</sup>.

- Mold spores are found both indoors and outdoors.
- Mold spores are always in the air.
- Mold needs moisture and food to grow.
- Mold begins to grow when it lands on a damp surface and “eats” what it lands on<sup>2</sup>.

**Mold spores are always in the air.**

Outside molds digest dead leaves and other dead plant material. Inside molds are usually found in damp areas like bathrooms, basements, and around windows<sup>3</sup>.

The best way to reduce mold inside your home is by controlling moisture<sup>2</sup>. Mold needs moisture to grow<sup>7</sup>.

Mold can grow on:

- leaves<sup>7</sup>
- wood
- paper
- carpet<sup>2</sup>

## Mold and Asthma

Mold can be an asthma trigger<sup>2</sup>.

Molds produce irritants and allergens<sup>4</sup>. 6-10% of people are thought to be allergic to allergens from fungi<sup>1</sup>.

Not enough research has been done to know if exposure to fungi causes asthma. In people with asthma who are allergic, exposure to fungi can cause an asthma attack<sup>1</sup>.

# Asthma and Mold

## Mold and Respiratory Symptoms

In people who are allergic to mold, breathing or touching it can cause an allergic reaction. An allergic reaction to mold can happen right away or be delayed<sup>4</sup> and can be caused by live or dead mold spores<sup>6</sup>.

Common allergic responses include:

- sneezing
- runny nose
- red eyes<sup>4</sup>

Even if you are not allergic to mold, mold can irritate your:

- eyes
- skin
- nose
- throat
- lungs<sup>6</sup>

Other symptoms from mold exposure in a damp indoor environment include upper respiratory tract symptoms (like sore throat, nasal congestion, and rhinitis), cough, and wheeze<sup>5</sup>.

Exposure to mold can make people who are not yet affected by it become sensitive to it and repeated exposure can make people more sensitive<sup>6</sup>.



## What to do

If you have asthma, avoid contact with mold<sup>2</sup>.

Mold can grow in areas that are hard to see. Common signs of mold growth include water stains and a musty or earthy smell. Check your home often for signs of mold or moisture. Wipe up any excess water quickly to prevent mold

growth. If you know you have mold, use your resources to clean it instead of testing it<sup>7</sup>.

If the area of mold you need to clean is less than about 10 square feet, you can usually clean it yourself<sup>4</sup>. Refer to the following Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

resource for help with mold cleanup.

- **Mold, Moisture, and Your Home** - [www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html](http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldguide.html)
- **Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings** - [www.epa.gov/mold/mold\\_remediation.html](http://www.epa.gov/mold/mold_remediation.html)

More information about asthma is available at [www.health.utah.gov/asthma](http://www.health.utah.gov/asthma).



## References

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